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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2588
INFO RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2703
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1616
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 1599
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 001035

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, PRM, DRL; NSC FOR EPHU

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [ID](#) [BM](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: GOI ACTS TO STOP VIOLENCE AT ROHINGYA CAMP IN ACEH

REF: A. JAKARTA 917 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)B. JAKARTA 629

Classified By: Acting Pol/C Stanley Harsha, reasons 1.4 (b+d).

[1](#)1. (U) This message was coordinated with Consulate Medan.

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY. In response to recent beatings of Rohingya asylum seekers and Bangladeshi migrants by Indonesian Red Cross staff at a camp in East Aceh, the GOI has dispatched a security team to the camp to restore order. The situation is now calm, but tense. Dep/ConGen Medan visited the camp and met with local officials to urge protection for the migrants. DepPol/C spoke with senior GOI officials to raise our concerns and seek a solution to the difficult situation. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)3. (C) Tensions at an overcrowded camp holding nearly 195 Rohingya and Bangladeshi irregular migrants boiled over in recent days with Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) staff beating the migrants. Indonesians had taken excellent care of the migrants since they washed ashore in February, but camp conditions caused the situation to deteriorate. According to International Organization for Migration (IOM), which manages humanitarian care at the camp (with PRM funding), the following incidents have occurred:

--March 19, three refugees were beaten after they caught PMI staff watching a pornographic video.

--April 13, seven men disappeared and were recaptured.

--May 30, two Rohingyas escaped after being caught sexually assaulting a 17-year-old boy. One of the fugitives is believed to be the smuggler.

--June 12, 21 migrants tried to escape while watching a sporting event at a stadium. Police recaptured them all. Back at camp, two were beaten by PMI staff in front of IOM staff, who intervened. That night after IOM staff had gone home, PMI beat all 21, some severely, migrants told IOM. These incidents also were confirmed by International Crisis Group's Sidney Jones, who visited the camp on June 17 and interviewed the traumatized migrants at length through the IOM interpreter.

--June 15, one Rohingya and one Bangladeshi escaped and are still at large. That same night, three PMI staff, possibly assisted by an off-duty policeman, went to each tent one-by-one and threw hot water on the men, and then assaulted most people in each tent. Some were selected for more severe beatings presumably to extract information about the escape of the two men. Their arms were pinned by one man while a

second man beat them.

WELCOME WORN OUT

14. (C) When the migrants first arrived on February 2, the community received them with open arms, providing fish and vegetables and inviting them to their homes for dinner. The migrants had high morale and were effusive in their gratitude to Indonesia when we met with them in March (ref B). However, the migrants were kept too long in this makeshift camp in the middle of a small village, and tensions have escalated. They are all anxious to escape the camp to continue to Malaysia and seek work, so keeping them contained is very difficult, IOM staff told DepPol/C. PMI staff began to see themselves more as prison guards than humanitarian workers, one IOM official explained.

15. (C) IOM's Jakarta's Steve Hamilton told DepPol/C that IOM has asked the GOI to transfer the 35 minors in the camp to IOM housing in Medan, North Sumatra and the Bangladeshis to an immigration detention camp at Tanjung Pinang island, Sumatra. IOM wants the remaining Rohingyas either to be placed in IOM community housing in Medan or to be combined with Rohingyas already in the northern Aceh Sabang island camp, which IOM also manages, Hamilton said. Conditions are much better in that camp, which is located at a Navy Base.

SECURITY TEAM DISPATCHED TO ENSURE SAFETY

16. (C) After IOM alerted us of the latest violence on June 16, DepPol/C talked to senior Foreign Ministry and Security

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Ministry officials. Subsequently, the Security Ministry dispatched a three-person security team of police and military officials to the camp on June 18, Zainal Arifin of the Security Ministry's Aceh Desk told DepPol/C. The team's purpose is to stop the violence and protect the safety of the migrants he said, as well as to seek a long-term solution. He concurred with IOM's proposals to move the migrants out of the Idi Rayeuk camp and to separate the youth from adults.

17. (C) A senior Deplu official, Director of International Security Desra Percaya, told DepPol/C that the ministry would expedite moving the migrants out of Idi Rayeuk. However, to date Deplu has been very slow in making any decisions on dealing with this problem and is having difficulty coordinating with Immigration.

CONSULATE MEDAN REASSURES MIGRANTS

18. (C) Dep/ConGen Medan visited the camp on June 17, meeting with the district's Vice Regent and Deputy Police Chief to raise our concerns over violence against the migrants. These officials then accompanied Dep/ConGen to the camp where they told camp staff and the migrants that violence would not be tolerated and that the migrants' safety would be ensured. Dep/ConGen reiterated these points, telling them that the USG is very concerned about their safety

19. (C) When the Vice Regent asked the migrants who had been beaten, 10 identified themselves. Dep/ConGen later interviewed a number of those to corroborate their stories. Morale is very low at the camp and many want to flee. The GOI also has not allowed UNHCR to inform the Rohingyas that they have been granted political asylum protection status, thus raising their anxiety about their future. In addition, the migrants fear further retaliation. PMI staff are also stressed by the conditions. However, the camp was calm the nights of June 17 and 18 and remains calm, the IOM manager at the camp told DepPol/C. The district's deputy police chief also visited the camp again on June 19 to make sure there was no more violence. The three PMI staff who had beaten the migrants were removed from the camp. IOM is talking with police about providing 24-hour security.

¶10. (C) Hopefully, safety has been restored for the time being. Nevertheless, conditions are such that the migrants need to be transferred very soon. We will continue to press the GOI over the next few days for immediate action, in cooperation with IOM and UNHCR. UNHCR has also sent a letter to the GOI expressing their concern.

NORTH